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Summary record of the 18th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 19 October 2004, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Kuchinsky ..... (Ukraine)
later: Ms. Astanah Banu (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Malaysia)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Agenda item 93: Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/C.3/59/L.16 and L.17)

Introduction of draft decision A/C.3/59/L.16: Outcome of the ten-year review of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly

1. **Mr. Ndimeni** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, introduced the draft decision, explaining that its main purpose was to ensure that the Third Committee would pay attention to the outcome of the 2005 session of the Commission for Social Development. The ten-year review should not be used to reopen the commitments made during the Copenhagen Summit or the outcome of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, but rather to adopt practical measures that would be conducive to implementation.

Introduction of draft resolution A/C.3/59/L.17: Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly

2. **Mr. Rehren** (Chile), introducing the draft resolution, said that its main purpose was to promote implementation of the commitments made in the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action and further initiatives for social development, as well as to reaffirm the commitment of the international community to speed up social development for all.

Agenda item 94 (a): Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*) (A/C.3/59/L.18)

Introduction of draft resolution A/C.3/59/L.18: Policies and programmes involving youth

3. **Ms. Carvalho** (Portugal) announced that Angola, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Monaco, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey and the United Kingdom had joined the sponsors of the draft resolution. The negotiations on the text should be concluded soon. The sponsors hoped that it would be adopted by consensus and with the widest support.

Agenda item 96: Crime prevention and criminal justice (*continued*) (A/C.3/59/L.20 and L.22)

Introduction of draft resolution A/C.3/59/L.20: International law enforcement assistance network for combating the criminal misuse of information technologies

4. **Mr. Siv** (United States of America) introducing the draft resolution, said that it was aimed at expanding the coverage of the Cybercrime Point of Contact Network, which had been created to enhance traditional methods of assistance in crimes involving networked communications and related technologies.

Introduction of draft resolution A/C.3/59/L.22: Strengthening the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme, in particular its technical cooperation capacity

5. **Mr. Cavallari** (Italy) said that Argentina, Belarus, Norway and Peru had joined the sponsors of the draft resolution. He stressed the need to strengthen the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme, in keeping with the recommendations set forth in the report of the Secretary-General (A/59/205). The draft resolution was intended to build upon and enhance the momentum of the entry into force of the Palermo Convention and its two Protocols and to ensure that the necessary resources were provided so that the Programme could respond to the new challenges and increasing demands for technical assistance. Although the text was largely based on the resolution adopted at the fifty-eighth session, some changes had been made so as to make it more effective and action-oriented. He hoped it would be adopted by consensus, with the broadest support possible.

Agenda item 97: International drug control (*continued*) (A/C.3/59/L.19)

Introduction of draft resolution A/C.3/59/L.19: International cooperation against the world drug problem

6. **Ms. Feller** (Mexico) said that Afghanistan, Belarus, Brazil, Panama, Singapore, South Africa and Tajikistan had joined the sponsors of the draft resolution. The sponsors had tried to propose a balanced text that would reflect the concerns of all countries, groups and regions and include the new challenges facing the international community as a result of the ongoing changes in the phenomenon of drug production, trafficking and abuse. Noting that informal consultations were still underway with a number of delegations, she said that she hoped the draft resolution would be adopted without a vote.

Agenda item 101: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/59/41 and Corr.1, A/59/184-S/2004/602, A/59/190, A/59/274 and A/59/331)

7. **Mr. Makanga** (Gabon) said that since ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1994, his country had carried out a large number of initiatives on behalf of children. His Government's determination to protect children was evident in the fact that it had recently enacted a law prohibiting trafficking in and exploitation of children in the national territory and was promoting bills on the creation of a children's parliament and a national observatory for the protection of the rights of the child.

8. In cooperation with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, the Government had established a fund to help children orphaned by HIV/AIDS, as well as other vulnerable children. It had also participated in several regional meetings convened for the purpose of developing policies on behalf of such children.

9. Despite the progress made to date, children still lived in precarious conditions in many regions of the world, especially the developing countries, because of poverty, armed conflict and diseases such as HIV/AIDS. States and all those involved in promoting and protecting the rights of children must take urgent action to implement the commitments made under the relevant international conventions. That was how the rights of children must be protected, not just on paper.

10. *Ms. Astanah Banu (Malaysia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

11. **Ms. Hoch** (Liechtenstein) said that, as noted in the second national report of Liechtenstein on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in the last five years clear progress had been made in the protection of children from sexual abuse by making the necessary adjustments in domestic law and setting up prevention and support mechanisms. Criminal law had been tightened with respect to sexual offences, the penalty for sexual abuse of minors had been increased, and child pornography and abuse abroad had been criminalized. The Liechtenstein Parliament had adopted a revision of the Code of Criminal Procedure which improved the protection of victims in criminal proceedings and took their interests better into account. Key points of the Victims' Protection Act were sensitive questioning, once-only testimony, and questioning by an expert. In 1999 an interdisciplinary expert group had been founded which served primarily as a contact point for professionals who were confronted with cases of sexual abuse and promoted relations and effective cooperation between existing assistance systems. Her delegation wanted to highlight the involvement of civil society and, in particular, of children and young people in the current revision of the Youth Act. The participation of young people would also be firmly enshrined in the revised Youth Act. At the same time, discussions on new forms of participation were taking place, as a result of which the Government had decided to delegate more young people to international and European conferences.

12. As her delegation had pointed out on other occasions, the discrepancy between existing norms and standards and their implementation was sobering. The Convention on the Rights of the Child enjoyed almost universal support; yet Member States and the international community had failed to live up to their promise to protect and promote the most fundamental right of the child, which was the right to life. According to data published by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 30 000 children died every day of preventable causes. Supply of basic life-saving services and, in particular, adequate assistance to pregnant women and to mothers and their newborn children could save millions of lives.

13. The spread of armed conflict was another factor increasing the number of child deaths. The Report of the Secretary-General on the Comprehensive

assessment of the United Nations system response to children affected by armed conflict (A/59/331) showed that the United Nations system response was less then satisfying and had many shortcomings. The international community had to react and implement the recommendations resulting from the assessment. Above all, there had to be more institutional clarity regarding the responsibilities of different actors involved at United Nations Headquarters and in the field. Her delegation agreed that it was beneficial to have an independent advocate for children and armed conflict. The advocacy efforts undertaken by the special representative had helped to place the topic high on the international agenda, but the mandate had to be reformulated, giving a clearer indication of the tasks to be fulfilled by the office.

14. **Ms. Khalil** (Egypt) said that her delegation looked forward to the in-depth study on violence against children that was being prepared by the Secretary-General and hoped that it would cast light on the problem and be helpful in developing programmes and strategies to address it. Her delegation wished to draw attention to the initiatives that had been undertaken by Egypt in recent years to protect children and, in particular, to suppress violence against children. Article 29 of the Civil Code stated that human personality began at birth; thus, from the moment they were born, all children had the same rights to well-being and protection as adults. The Civil Code also defined the rights of human embryos. Law 12/1996, on childhood, outlined regulations to the law applicable to minors, in line with the relevant international instruments on the rights of the child.

15. The Egyptian National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other agencies had organized the Afro-Arab Expert Consultation on Legal Tools for the Prevention of Female Genital Mutilation, which had met in Cairo in June 2003. At that meeting, representatives of governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and civil society organizations had issued the Cairo Declaration for the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation, which recommended the adoption of legal measures to prohibit the practice. In 2003, in collaboration with the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood and a number of different stakeholders, the government had put underway the national plan on genital mutilation, with the aim of totally eliminating that practice. The project, which was designed especially to protect those segments of society in which genital mutilation was more likely to be practiced, was being carried out in the context of a comprehensive development plan which took into account social and cultural circumstances. In recent years, thanks to those activities, the practice had been eliminated in 120 villages. Another joint project was focused on drafting a major legislative text on the treatment of minors under 18 in the judicial system. Egypt's efforts in promoting and protecting the rights of the child were being carried out in the context of a review of domestic law to develop more detailed standards and include in the reference texts provisions on the protection of children who suffered violence.

16. With deep regret, her delegation found it necessary once again to denounce the desperate and increasingly serious situation of children in the occupied Palestinian territory, an issue that was not adequately covered in the reports submitted to the Committee. According to a recent news article, 13 Palestinian children had died during the first few days of Israeli army operations in Gaza. The data available to Palestinian human rights organizations showed a steady rise in the number of persons killed and wounded. Clearly, an army that killed so many children had no scruples nor did it understand human values. Her delegation urged the Committee to take the initiative in putting an end to military occupation against the Palestinian people so as to ensure that Palestinian children could fully enjoy their rights and live in safety. That would not be possible unless there was a full retreat from the occupied territories.

17. **Mr. Cumberbatch** (Cuba) said that well into the twenty-first century, the world's children were still suffering from disease, malnutrition, armed conflict, trafficking in persons, child prostitution, physical and sexual abuse, exploitation and uncertainty about the future. There was every indication that the world would not be able to achieve universal primary education by 2015, given that according to UNICEF data, one of every five school-age children was not attending primary school. Nor would the world reduce by two thirds the under-five mortality rate. Mortality was only slightly lower – 82 per 1,000 live births – than in 1998, when it had stood at 88; every year, 11 million children died from preventable or curable diseases. The final solution to those calamities was to change the unjust international order whereby all

production was concentrated in a few hands, and everybody else was excluded from any opportunity for improvement. A simple demonstration of political will to set aside a tiny share of the money that was wasted on wars and weapons would be enough to resolve the inequity, given that it cost 64 times more to train a soldier than to educate a school-age child.

18. Cuba welcomed the entry into force of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and on the involvement of children in armed conflict. Cuba had signed both protocols; it had ratified the first one and was considering ratification of the second, in line with its policy of cooperation on human rights and its unwavering commitment to the progress of children. The problems facing the international community with regard to children's issues were not confined to one particular group of countries; consequently, the practice of drawing up lists of countries did not contribute to the common effort and only added an element of political manipulation and aggression against third countries.

19. Cuba had made remarkable progress in the provision of services for children in spite of the harsh economic blockade to which it had been subjected for over forty years, which only made it more difficult to gain access to medication, technology and social benefits. It was the height of nonsense and manipulation that measures ostensibly designed to bring democracy to the country should include an offer to immunize all children under five who had not yet been vaccinated against the main childhood diseases under the current health system. The United States authorities knew perfectly well that all Cuban children were vaccinated against 11 diseases before their second birthday – something that the United States itself did not do. Moreover, 100 per cent of Cuba's children had access to full health services, and the infant mortality rate had been reduced to six per 1,000 live births. The ratio of classroom teachers to children in primary schools was one teacher for 20 students, and classrooms of more than 20 students had two teachers. New art, theatre, dance and music schools had been opened in all the major cities. Special education programmes ensured that all children with disabilities who were able to study were taken care of. In 2003, in recognition of Cuba's longstanding efforts in the field of education, the country had been granted an Honourable Mention in the King Sejong Literacy Prize granted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Cuba was also cooperating effectively with UNICEF, which guaranteed ongoing and coordinated actions through programmes and projects carried out throughout the island.

20. **Mr. Hackett** (Barbados), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that the future survival of mankind depended to a large extent on how policies to safeguard and nurture children were enacted and implemented. The Millennium Development Goals and the declaration emanating from the United Nations special session on children, held in 2002, placed heavy emphasis on ensuring the health, education and security of children through time-bound, action-oriented goals and targets. The United Nations had set a target date for reducing poverty, which particularly affected children, but present world trends cast doubt on the ability of countries to meet that target. It was also unlikely that they would meet the goal of achieving universal primary education by 2015, one of the Millennium Development Goals pertaining to children. The member States of CARICOM called for a re-commitment to the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, particularly their targets for domestic and international resource mobilization and investment in basic social and economic infrastructure, health, nutrition and education, which paid special attention to children. Developing countries needed concrete action and support to make those targets a reality. Nationally, it required universal access to social services and the commitment of all countries to the full implementation of the 20/20 Initiative called for at the World Summit for Social Development in 1995. Internationally, it required greater cooperation and assistance from the developed world for debt relief and reviving the Doha Development Agenda negotiations.

21. The small island developing States and low-lying coastal States, including those belonging to the Caribbean Community, experienced specific problems that particularly affected the most vulnerable persons in a society, the poor and children. It was therefore critical that the international community should continue to recognize the special circumstances of those States and pay heed to their calls for special assistance. On the question of priorities in the world, he stressed that in the view of CARICOM, although

security seemed to be considered more important than other problems facing mankind, a multidimensional approach must be undertaken that did not undermine efforts to achieve social and economic development.

22. In recent years, CARICOM had repeatedly stressed the need for urgent action in tackling the HIV/AIDS problem. The Caribbean region had a high rate of infection with that disease, which was devastating populations and orphaning thousands of children; in particular, there was a high level of mother-to-child transmission. For the CARICOM States, whose people were their greatest resource, the spectre of HIV/AIDS destroying its children and youth was daunting. The Caribbean Community wished to reiterate the pressing need internationally to devote more funds and attention to the issue. Governments in the region were striving to continue allocating additional financial resources to fighting AIDS, and they had national programmes to reduce the rates of mother-to-child transmission. Public education programmes had been started with the aid of UNICEF, governmental policies and NGO initiatives.

23. The Caribbean Community believed that education was the weapon for combating HIV/AIDS and other problems affecting children, such as the traffic in children. Education was not only a fundamental right, but also an investment and a tool for economic and social development. Throughout the region, both boys and girls were entitled to free primary and secondary education, and in the majority of cases, school attendance was mandatory between the ages of 5 and 16. Article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which spoke explicitly of the responsibility of States to make education accessible to all children, had been given special attention by the countries of the region.

24. **Mr. Samet** (Algeria) said that, in the view of his delegation, making the world fit for children would constitute a significant contribution towards attaining the Millennium Development Goals. The Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at the special session on children should be implemented in the context of coordinated follow-up to the agendas of other major international conferences and summits. In his discussion of progress in the four major goal areas of the Declaration and Plan of Action (A/59/274) – promoting healthy lives; providing quality education; protecting against abuse, exploitation and violence; and combating HIV/AIDS –, the Secretary-General had acknowledged that although there had been some success, especially in terms of the implementation nationally and regionally of action plans on behalf of children, much remained to be done.

25. Indeed, in many respects, children were still in a precarious and even distressing situation in several parts of the world, especially Africa. If the millions of children who still lived in subhuman conditions were to live in dignity, their economic and social rights must be taken into account, and they must be able to enjoy the right to development. It bore repeating that human rights also entailed access to education, health care, food, drinking water and proper housing. It was also important, however, to prevent warring factions from harming children and to put an end to the shameful practice of enlisting child soldiers. Drastic measures must be taken against the exploitation of children, especially sexual exploitation. His delegation wanted to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict for the significant contribution he had made to publicizing the problems of children affected by armed conflict, including children living under foreign occupation, especially in Palestine and the occupied Arab territories.

26. Algeria had allocated substantial resources and had make tremendous efforts to promote the fundamental rights of children through comprehensive and well-coordinated intersectoral action plans designed to reduce child mortality, improve child nutrition, promote universal access to primary education and provide assistance to children living in difficult circumstances. With regard to the fulfilment of its obligations, he said that Algeria had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. His Government had duly submitted its initial report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and would be submitting its next one in 2005. It had completed the Secretary-General's questionnaire on violence against children. In conclusion, he stressed that Algeria, which had played an active role in the process leading up to the United Nations special session on children, would spare no effort to implement the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at that session.

27. **Ms. Pham Thi Kim Anh** (Viet Nam) said that her delegation aligned itself with the statement made by the delegation of Malaysia on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The continuous attention focused on the rights of the child

since the World Summit on Children had been heightened with the adoption of the document entitled "A World Fit for Children" at the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly on children. The special session had identified the areas in which efforts should be focused by the international community to ensure better protection of the rights of children and their development, and it had given new impetus to national and international initiatives in favour of children.

28. Viet Nam had always given priority to the implementation of the rights of children and was earnestly carrying out its international commitments. To date, Viet Nam had made significant progress towards realizing its goals, as noted in the mid-term review for the 2004 regular session of UNICEF, which stated that Viet Nam enjoyed relative equality in health and education. Indeed, 100 per cent of the provinces and cities of Viet Nam were providing primary education, illiteracy had been wiped out, 95 per cent of children were enrolled in primary school at the right age, the mortality rate in children under five had been reduced to 42 per 1,000 live births, 93.3 per cent of children under one year old had been vaccinated with six vaccines, polio had been eradicated, and 70 per cent of orphaned children had been given care by the community.

29. Turning to the issue of children and armed conflict, she said that her delegation was concerned about the serious situation of children in many parts of the world. Children were the primary victims of armed conflicts, in which many were killed, orphaned and abducted, or deprived of education, health care and other fundamental rights. Furthermore, children were the ones who suffered most in post-conflict situations. Her delegation therefore welcomed the decision to establish a monitoring, reporting and compliance mechanism for children affected by armed conflict, and would like to express its support for the important work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

30. Viet Nam was strongly committed to promote, protect and care for children and had made efforts in that regard. However, owing to the country's low level of economic development, there were still major impediments to the realization and promotion of the rights of children, such as trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children, and HIV/AIDS, a disease that affected more than 250,000 children. With the valuable support of UNICEF and other international partners, the Government of Viet Nam was doing its utmost to solve those problems by carrying out rights-based programmes, giving priority to the protection of particularly vulnerable children and setting up a juvenile justice system.

31. **Ms. Helal** (Canada), speaking on behalf also of Australia and New Zealand, said that the three countries placed the highest priority on promoting and protecting the rights of the child. The Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols were fundamental to the realization of those rights. It was not enough to carry out targeted actions, but it was also important to mainstream child rights within all activities, at both the international and national levels, and incorporate a gender perspective in all programmes and policies related to children, without neglecting children belonging to disadvantaged groups.

32. Priority must be given to reaffirming and advancing the rights of the child in debate at the United Nations in the framework of the omnibus resolution. However, Australia, Canada and New Zealand were concerned that the length and detail of the resolution was not conducive to advancing the rights of the child; its size limited consideration of new and critical issues. It should be thoroughly reviewed and streamlined in order to focus on urgent and central issues.

33. The Committee on the Rights of the Child played a key role in promoting more effective implementation of the Convention. Australia, Canada and New Zealand welcomed the efforts of the Committee to make its work more effective, including the discussion it had organized recently on implementing child rights in early childhood. They also welcomed the increase in the Committee's membership, allowing for more geographical representation as well as expertise. That would enable the Committee to take up its new tasks in monitoring the implementation of the Optional Protocols to the Convention.

34. Australia, Canada and New Zealand called on States Parties to fully cooperate with the Committee, including by honouring their reporting obligations. They supported efforts to strengthen monitoring, reporting and accountability for violations of children's rights in armed conflicts and to address the specific needs of the girl child. They encouraged close coordination with existing initiatives, such as those related to the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

They supported the work of United Nations agencies, including the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict and his Office, and of non-governmental organizations. Efforts of all key stakeholders remained essential to combating violations of children's rights and ensuring adherence to relevant international law.

35. The newly released report of the Secretary-General on the comprehensive assessment of the United Nations system response to children affected by armed conflict would provide important guidance on how to address child protection in situations of armed conflict in a sustainable and coordinated way. Stressing the importance of Security Council resolution 1539 (2004), she said that Australia, Canada and New Zealand encouraged Member States that had not done so to ratify without delay the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which contained crucial provisions criminalizing serious acts against children.

36. Australia, Canada and New Zealand continued to be deeply concerned at the continuing sexual exploitation of children, including trafficking, prostitution, pornography and sexual abuse, and wished to express their support for the work of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. Measures at the international, regional and national levels to combat such crimes, prosecute the perpetrators and protect the rights of the victims were critical.

37. Violence against children was a complex problem demanding an urgent response. Australia, Canada and New Zealand fully supported the work of the independent expert, Mr. Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, in conducting an in-depth study of the issue. They trusted that the recommendations of the study would include effective remedies and both preventive and rehabilitative measures at the national and international levels.

38. Australia, Canada and New Zealand were taking concrete steps to implement the agenda set forth in the document "A World Fit for Children". In early 2004, Canada had completed its plan of action as follow-up to the United Nations special session on children, entitled "A Canada Fit for Children". The plan was a result of consultations involving stakeholder groups from all of Canada's geographic areas, governments, aboriginal organizations and children and youth. Other domestic priorities for Canada included the Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care, under which governments were working to improve access to affordable, quality, regulated early learning and child care programmes and services. Canada was taking steps to fight child poverty and promote early development through the National Child Benefit and the Early Childhood Development Agreement. A number of legislative and law enforcement initiatives had been undertaken to protect children from exploitation, and preparations were underway to hold a North American consultation in 2005 on the United Nations study on violence against children which would include the active participation of children and youth, both in the preparatory process and at the consultation.

39. While New Zealand was doing well by international standards on the rights of the child, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child had identified areas where improvement could be made in 2003. In response, New Zealand had developed the Convention on the Rights of the Child work programme, and in 2004 had released an updated work programme spanning five years of activity (2004–2008). It addressed 50 issues in direct response to the Committee's 2003 recommendations on the Convention and on the Optional Protocol on child soldiers. Within that framework, New Zealand was actively progressing towards the lifting of reservations to the Convention. In addition, New Zealand had just submitted its response to the request for information for the study on violence against children.

40. Australia was currently finalizing its National Plan of Action for Children and Young People in response to "A World Fit for Children", in consultation with children and young people, governments and the non-governmental sector. It was also working towards increased coordination of policies and services for children and their families, with a particular focus on prevention and early intervention approaches. To that end, Australia was developing a National Agenda for Early Childhood to maximize the impact of existing activity and inform future investments to ensure resources were directed to priority issues. Four broad action areas had been proposed for national attention: healthy young families, early learning and care, supporting parents and families, and child-friendly communities. Australia, New Zealand and Canada

continued to cooperate with other countries through their respective regional organizations on the important issues of smuggling of migrants, trafficking in persons and related transnational crime, including the issue of trafficking of children and child sex tourism. Although the challenges were daunting, the three countries wished to reiterate their commitment to working with other Member States and the United Nations system in finding the most effective ways to enhance the rights of all children.

41. **Dr. Kyaw Win** (Myanmar) said that the delegation of Myanmar wished to align itself with the statement made by the representative of Malaysia on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Quoting the words of the representative of Myanmar at the thirty-sixth session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, he said that children enjoyed a special place in Myanmar and were regarded as "jewels" of society. Because of the extended family pattern which was predominant among Myanmar families, children were nurtured not only by their parents, grandparents and relatives but also by their respective communities. For that reason, the Union of Myanmar had readily acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991. It had promulgated the Child Law in 1993 and was implementing it with a firm intention to promote and protect the rights of children in the country.

42. When Madame Sadako Ogata had first visited Myanmar as an independent expert for the United Nations in 1989, she had written clearly that what she had seen in Myanmar was in some ways "a model society". The official recognition of Myanmar's efforts had come about on 4 June 2004, when the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child in its report had acknowledged many positive developments, including the creation of the National Human Rights Committee in 2000; the adoption of rules and regulations related to the Child Law in 2001; the creation of the Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation in 2003, whose mandate included promotion and protection of the rights of the child; the establishment of the National AIDS Programme and the joint programme for HIV/AIDS Myanmar 2001–2005; the National Health Plan 1996–2001, which had achieved high immunization coverage for a significant part of the population; the Education for All national action plans; and the Joint Plan of Action for the elimination of forced labour with the International Labour Organization (ILO). Myanmar thanked the Committee for acknowledging those advances amidst various preposterous allegations circulated by expatriate dissidents and splinter groups of former insurgent organizations that remained out in the cold for various reasons. Now that their military campaigns against the Union were no longer significant without the foot soldiers who had gone home to be peacefully resettled in their own States, the main strategy of those groups had been to turn to a war of propaganda utilizing the ample amounts of funds available to them under the umbrella of politically motivated non-governmental organizations.

43. Myanmar was clearly no longer a country in armed conflict, and it was turning a blind eye to reality to include Myanmar on the list of countries in such a situation. However, the Government was taking no chances and had formed a high-level Committee for the Prevention of the Recruitment of Child Soldiers on 5 January 2004 and had recently allowed the Resident Representative of UNICEF in Myanmar to observe first-hand the recruitment process of the all-volunteer Myanmar Armed Forces.

44. Myanmar regretted that the European Union had imposed diplomatic and economic sanctions on Myanmar that were not compatible with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which had been ratified by the European Union and by Myanmar. Article 2.2 of the Convention clearly stated that States Parties should take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child was protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child's parents, legal guardians or family members. However, the list of names in the current visa bans on senior officers of the Myanmar Government included not only children but also a few grandchildren, some not yet of school age. It was an irony that the European Union, as an advocate of human rights, should be violating one of its own most important conventions.

45. Although it was true that nothing could be done overnight, Myanmar had given an inexorable momentum to its efforts to promote and protect the rights of its children. The recent introduction of human rights education into the curricula of basic education for middle schools and high schools was a testament to Myanmar's ambition that those children should grow up in a world where there was universal respect for

human rights, in keeping with Myanmar's longstanding tradition and culture.

46. **Ms. Abeysekera** (Sri Lanka) said that Sri Lanka's position with regard to children had been in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child even before it had been ratified. The general situation of children in the country had improved, including through free education and health care and subsidized food. Building on that foundation, Sri Lanka's incorporation of the Millennium Development Goals into its development strategy would help to create the environment necessary for further implementation of the Convention. Among other things, Sri Lanka had made education compulsory from ages 5 to 14, and it had carried out extensive skills training programmes, conducted immunization programmes in schools and clinics, and raised the minimum employment age to 14, thus bringing child labour rates down from 8 per cent in 1996 to 0.7 per cent in 2002.

47. Sri Lanka was a party to all the ILO conventions on child labour and their protocols, and the Penal Code had provisions against child abuse and cruelty to children and trafficking. The National Child Protection Authority was the main agency responsible for conducting investigations and enforcing the relevant laws, organizing training and awareness programmes, enforcing regulations and collaborating with UNICEF. A number of non-governmental organizations were also involved in protecting children's rights, and the media had broadcast awareness campaigns among the public.

48. The efforts of the Government and civil society of Sri Lanka to improve the situation of children in the country were faced with the recurring problem of the recruitment of child soldiers by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Despite all the promises and peace talks, and the fact that LTTE had signed with the Government of Sri Lanka the Action Plan for children affected by war, UNICEF and other organizations, including the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, had reported that the situation had not improved. Her delegation strongly felt that the international community should pressure organizations such as LTTE to stop that practice.

49. In keeping with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Declaration and the Plan of Action of "A World Fit for Children", the Government of Sri Lanka had launched a National Plan of Action for the Children of Sri Lanka 2004–2008. With the help of UNICEF, Save the Children and a leading Sri Lankan non-governmental organization, it had obtained the participation and inputs of children between the ages of 4 and 18, including those with disabilities and street children, in determining the content of the Plan. The main objective of the Plan was to create opportunities for Sri Lanka's children in an environment that was safe and conducive to their overall development and to integrate interventions on behalf of children into the country's broader policies, while ensuring their consistency with Sri Lanka's cultural values, human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Plan covered action in regard to child development, education, health care, water supply, child protection, child labour and juvenile justice, and recognized that children needed to grow up in a family environment in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) had congratulated the Government of Sri Lanka for the Plan and had pledged support for it.

50. **Mr. Sin Song Chol** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that his delegation had taken note of the reports of the Secretary-General on the Status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (A/59/190) and on Follow-up to the United Nations special session on children (A/59/274). He commended the efforts of the international organizations, including UNICEF, in the protection and promotion of children's rights and welfare. He welcomed the proposal of the Committee on the Rights of the Child to consider the reports of States parties in two parallel chambers, in order to improve its working methods.

51. His delegation considered it most important to draw up clear policies to put into practice once and for all the commitments undertaken in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the special session of the General Assembly on children and other major international conferences and set up the necessary institutional mechanisms for the protection and promotion of the rights of the child. Each country should pursue a child policy suitable to its specific situation and requirements, while keeping its international commitments.

52. It was always the vulnerable groups, in particular children, who were most affected by economic sanctions and blockades arising from interference in the domestic affairs of a country, as well as military occupation, armed conflict, racism and xenophobia.

The child issue must not be abused for political purposes. International cooperation and solidarity were crucial, and international organizations, including UNICEF, should assume greater responsibility by joining in the efforts of governments to protect and promote children's rights.

53. The Government of the People's Democratic Republic of Korea gave high priority to children and had enacted laws on education and child rearing which incorporated the rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Despite the natural disasters the country had suffered in recent years and the economic sanctions and blockades it had been suffering for more than half a century, the Government provided free education and health care to all children. It had and would continue to take measures to improve their situation, in keeping with the objectives of the document "A World Fit for Children". The Committee on the Rights of the Child had considered the second report of the Government in June 2004.

54. **Dr. Tan Kee Kwong** (Malaysia), speaking on behalf of the Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that ASEAN priorities for children had been placed on the regional agenda as an outcome of the Third Meeting of ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Social Welfare held in 1993. Subsequently, the main instruments adopted in that respect had been the Hanoi Plan of Action, adopted in 1998, the first in a series of plans of action to implement ASEAN Vision 20/20; the Declaration of Commitments on Children, in 2001; and the Declaration of ASEAN Concord II (Bali II). All of those instruments addressed children's concerns, particularly their survival, protection and development; combating trafficking in, and crimes of violence against, women and children; full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, of which all ASEAN countries were parties; promoting a gentler, safer and more caring environment for children through strengthening families; seeking the active involvement of all sectors of society in economic development; and including children's issues and concerns in regional integration processes. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations was currently preparing the Vientiane Action Programme as the successor plan to the Hanoi Plan of Action. It was expected that the Plan would be adopted by the ASEAN Heads of State or Government at the Tenth Summit, to be held in Lao People's Democratic Republic on 29 November 2004.

55. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations had been working with UNICEF to address priorities identified in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Declaration of Commitments on Children and the document "A World Fit for Children". It had submitted to UNICEF a proposal to develop a multidisciplinary framework for child abuse and child neglect. The United Nations Children's Fund was providing technical assistance for the ASEAN project on early childhood care and development and was organizing regular East Asia and Pacific ministerial consultations to assess progress achieved in the area in meeting the goals set by the World Summit on Children.

56. **Ms. Asmady** (Indonesia) said the document "A World Fit for Children" had set a basis for the Government to advance children's rights in the national development programme. In commemoration of National Children's Day, the Government had launched the National Programme for Children in Indonesia 2015, which covered the key issues of child health and nutrition, HIV/AIDS, early childhood care and development, basic education and protection against abuse. With regard to protection, she said that following the enactment of the Child Protection Act in 2002, a National Committee on Child Protection had been established to ensure implementation of the Act. Three national action plans were currently underway to fight the worst forms of child labour, commercial sexual exploitation of children and trafficking in women and children. At the regional level, the Government of Indonesia, working closely with the International Organization for Migration and with the participation of ASEAN and Australia, had supported a number of joint measures to combat the sexual exploitation of children in the region.

57. On health issues, she said that efforts were being made to reduce maternal and infant mortality and malnutrition, combat HIV/AIDS, encourage vaccination and immunization and provide basic health care in all districts. Under education, Indonesia's Law No. 20/2003, on the national education system, underlined the importance of education for all in the overall development programme of the country and stipulated the considerable budget allocations that had to be made to support the nine-year compulsory education programme and provide financial support for low-income families to send their children to school.

Finally, the Government was considering the recommendations and observations made by the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the second periodic report of Indonesia, with a view to integrating them into national strategies.

58. **Ms. Assoumou** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that poverty, malnutrition, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, discrimination in all its forms, armed conflict and terrorism had become daily occurrences in the lives of children. Her delegation wished to pay tribute to the memory of the school children of Beslan and all innocent victims of conflicts. According to UNICEF statistics, every year 11 million children died before their fifth birthday because of the lack of basic services. To deal with the deterioration of health care and rising infant and maternal morbidity and mortality rates, the Government of Côte d'Ivoire had put underway, in collaboration with UNICEF and with financing from the European Union, a 15-month project aimed at strengthening the capacity of health services in the districts most affected by the crisis by supplying equipment, medical supplies, vaccines and basic medicines; setting up dispensaries to provide prenatal care and birthing facilities; and distributing insecticide-impregnated mosquito nets. Polio vaccinations would be given as part of the 2004 measles vaccination campaign, in order to combat the new outbreak of that disease in the northern part of the country. The campaign, which was directed at children between 9 months and 14 years old, would soon be extended throughout the national territory.

59. The Government of Côte d'Ivoire had adopted a number of institutional and legal measures to combat child abductions and trafficking and exploitation of children. It had taken steps, inter alia, to provide the protection established in the Constitution for vulnerable groups and enforce the prohibition against the worst forms of child labour, as well as several provisions of the Penal Code against abduction of children and a bill on trafficking in children. At the regional and international levels, Côte d'Ivoire had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions 138 and 182, concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment and the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour. It had also begun the process of ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and on the involvement of children in armed conflict. In addition, it had ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and had taken part in several meetings, including those held in Cotonou in 1998 and in Libreville and Lomé in February and May 2000, at which platforms of action had been adopted to combat cross-border trafficking of children. In September 2000, the Government had signed a bilateral cooperation agreement with Mali concerning the fight against child trafficking, and in August 2003, it had signed a cooperation agreement with the International Labour Office which had led to the creation of the Steering Committee which was responsible for coordinating efforts to combat child labour and providing follow-up on the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour.

60. The use of child soldiers was a new form of child labour that turned children into both actors and victims of wars and armed conflict. In recent years, such conflicts had cut off the lives of two million children and left another four million mutilated; one million children had been orphaned, and another 10 million were suffering the consequences of abduction, detention and death of their parents. It was therefore urgent to find a solution to that problem and reunite children with their families and society, so that they could once again laugh, play and enjoy their childhood.

61. **Ms. Kusorgbor** (Ghana) said that considering the disheartening situation of the world's children, as described by the Secretary-General in his second report on Follow-up to the United Nations special session on children, international cooperation must be increased, and resources must be pooled to implement the principles enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Millennium Development Goals and the Declaration on "A World Fit for Children", in order to protect and promote the rights and the well-being of children. In that connection, Ghana welcomed the increasing role of regional mechanisms and the various collaborative efforts between countries and regional and international organizations in assessing regional challenges and defining appropriate regional responses. The collaboration between the African Union, the Economic Commission for Africa, the Secretariat of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and UNICEF had culminated in the publication of The Young Face of NEPAD, which elaborated on how the NEPAD initiatives could

complement the goals of a World Fit for Children and the Millennium Development Goals. It was also gratifying that a similar collaboration had resulted in the first monitoring report on the state of Africa's children and the establishment of a database on child-related indicators for Africa.

62. The Government of Ghana had undertaken several initiatives to improve the social and economic well-being of children, in fulfilment of its commitments under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which it had ratified in 1990. Several laws had been reformed to ensure the effective implementation of the fundamental human rights of children provided for in the Convention, the Children's Act had been promulgated in 1998, and a juvenile justice bill had been adopted. To ensure the effective integration of children's rights into national development policies, the lead governmental agencies in those matters (the Ghana National Commission on Children and the National Council for Women and Development) had been strengthened, an advocacy campaign had been initiated to sensitize the public about the need to counteract child trafficking and child migration, and capacity-building strategies had been implemented to financially empower women through the Women's Development Fund. In addition to its efforts to expand access to basic education and improve the quality of education, the Government was paying attention to the development of skills and strengthening collaboration with non-governmental organizations that worked to promote the cause of children.

63. The plight of thousands of children in conflict situations around the world should spur the international community to take concrete steps to alleviate their suffering. While Ghana recognized the commendable role of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict in addressing the issue, it wished to stress the need to comprehensively integrate the issue into the work of the relevant United Nations agencies and improve the level of coordination in the overall United Nations response.

64. **Mr. Tekle** (Eritrea) said that every human society was committed to its children and considered the satisfaction of their emotional, spiritual, moral and material needs as a cardinal duty and its highest social priority. Yet it was ironic that children had been the principal victims of the most egregious violations of human rights, including loss of identity and citizenship, child labour and military conscription, sexual exploitation, abduction, sale and slavery, genital mutilation and forced early marriage, as well as exposure to health hazards. There was a causal relationship between the violation of the human rights of children and poverty. The absence of adequate education and employment opportunities had made conscription to the regular military or other armed groups attractive, and human trafficking, debt bondage and other illicit activities possible.

65. During the liberation struggle, the motto of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) had been "Everything good for the children", and it had been practiced rigorously even during the grimmest years of extreme hardship and shortage. After independence, Eritrea had signed and ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child almost immediately. Ever since, Eritrea's children and youth had been given priority in all the basic laws of the country, including the National Charter (1994), the macroeconomic policy (1996) and the Constitution (1997). The national policy and subsequent guidelines had ensured the translation of the provisions of those basic laws into reality.

66. Eritreans believed that a healthy and educated child guaranteed the future of the nation. To that end, the Government had embarked upon a preventive health care programme for children which was devised to protect from the most prevalent diseases that afflicted children in developing countries, including malaria, polio and tuberculosis. It was giving special attention to the prevention of the transmission of HIV/AIDS from mother to child and provided care for orphans victimized by the scourge. The Government was also committed to the realization of the Millennium Development Goals on child mortality and had institutionalized a credible immunization system.

67. The educational and health programmes of the Front during the years of struggle had been recognized as remarkable achievements which could be exemplary even for conflict-free countries. The commitment to education was only a continuation of that noble tradition. The Government was determined to provide equal educational opportunities in the periphery and in the capital and hoped that the day would soon come that children would be able to attend school in their own villages. To that end, the Government had made a detailed review of the educational system to enhance its accessibility and effectiveness.

68. The commitment of the Eritrean Government to the promotion and protection of the rights of children was also reflected in the firm position it had taken on the issue of violence against them. That commitment was reflected in numerous legal provisions that had been enacted since independence and the advocacy and awareness programmes that had been put in place by organizations like the National Union of Eritrean Women. Eritrea therefore welcomed the launching of the Secretary-General's study on violence against children as a positive development.

69. The cruel victimization of children by armed conflict, whether internal or external, was of special significance to Eritreans, who had suffered for more than 30 years because of the horrific destruction wrought on their country by enemy armies. Those armies had been armed by external powers, both eastern and western, with the most sophisticated and lethal weapons of destruction, some of which were outlawed by international humanitarian law. At present, those who had survived cluster bombs, napalm and nerve gas were being killed by landmines and unexploded ordnance. In addition, Eritrean children had, during the last aggression, been abducted by enemy soldiers and reportedly used as human minesweepers and human shields, and they had been forced to perform slave labour, while girls as young as 12 years old had been raped.

70. It was reported that over 20 million Africans, many of whom were children, had been killed by small arms and light weapons. The sale and trafficking of children, child labour, commercial sexual exploitation, child pornography and other illicit activities had assumed frightening proportions. It was reported by ILO that 240 million children still worked, 180 million were intolerably exploited, 8.4 million were trapped in human trafficking, and 22,000 children had died from work-related accidents. Poverty and underdevelopment, as well as the socioeconomic gap between the rich and poor countries, which was steadily increasing, were the primary causes for that situation, especially in the age of globalization. In that connection, Eritrea recognized with appreciation the good work being done by ILO and UNICEF, as well as other international organizations, in the effort to eliminate the violation of the rights of the child, particularly through awareness-raising and advocacy activities.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.